

Subject: ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER! bleeds a bucket. BRUISER BRODIE! bleeds a bucket. CARLOS COLON! bleeds a bucket. INVADER II! bleeds a bucket. and other things from the harrowing weeks of all Puerto Rico.

ALOHA~!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #65!

Phil got a big bonanza of Puerto Rican Lucha Libre 1988 from Lariat Paul a few weeks back and we decided that it was too freakin big and weird to tackle solo so he made me some copies and we divided up the tapes and we decided to dedicate a whole Death Valley Driver to it. HELL! It's Puerto Rico- it's hard to find the wrestling and who knows what you get when you find it? Phil got the High-End Dan Kroffat-packed last part of the year and I got the Crappier Youngbloods-intensive first of 1988.

!@!@!@! WWC TV 11/21/87-10/12/88+ the Rufus R Jones matches from the last eight hours of the tapes.

I didn't know what to expect so I'll just tell you what I had pre-conceived. I figured embryonic W*ING-style wrestling with the blade ruling the day. I expected crazed mobs in Roberto Clemente Stadium watching with total bloodlust as Abdullah the Butcher and Carlos Colon carved each other up with razor blades. I expected barbed-wired and barbaric wrestling and hideous savagery that would point deep into the heart of a distant culture. I got a lot of that, but mostly I got wrestling that was exactly like the crappier elements of the Mid-Atlantic wrestling I watched as a child. Everything was a Paul Jones versus Wahoo McDaniel match for the most part and I found that strangely endearing. I will try to debunk the myths I had told myself when I thought of Puerto Rican wrestling. (I'll only hit the major, really weird, really good or REALLY bad matches)

Carlos Colon v. Kareem Muhammad:

The myth is that I told myself that Carlos Colon was a shittier version of Perro Aguayo. He smokes Perro like a cheap cigar. Colon is actually quite the Richman's Perro Aguayo- he's as over as Perro in front of his home crowd, but he is also not afraid to have a cool match when he is being busted open hardway by the right person. Kareem Muhammad will always be okay in my book because he was Candyman Ray Candy in Arkansas and Mid-Atlantic when I was a child and was one-half of the fabulous COMMANDOS with Commando Boone- who ruled it hard in NWA for a few months there. The problem is that Colon can't get him up for suplexes and Colon isn't gonna take the bumps that are necessary to make this match work so it kinda limps along until the finish. Not the man for a cool Colon match.

Abdullah the Butcher v. Bruiser Brody-Dog Collar match:

This was pretty fucking beautiful. I don't know why they felt the need to include a dog-collar, because blood is pretty much spraying profusely out of everyone's head before they even get them on. This is about the only kind of match of this kind that I dig for some reason and I can't

figure out why. I think it all goes back to the first time I ever saw the Shiek- which was when they showed him on Mid-Atlantic wrestling on film one time where he threw a fire ball at Andre the Giant. I remember how freaked out I was at the insanity of the Shiek. And then we ACTUALLY got Abdullah the Butcher in a couple of places I was living and he was crazier and he bled more and he was SO much cooler looking, you can imagine who over he was with me and my friends. If you want all heat and brutality and want to forget about cool moves and high workrate for twenty minutes, watch this baby. It's a bucket of blood. It's at Roberto Clemente stadium and the crowd is acting like it's the world's biggest cockfight. Maybe it's two buckets of blood.

Stan Hansen v. Missing Link:

Stan Hansen and the Missing Link have a match that is basically the Abdullah vs Brodie match, but without the heat and brutality. I guess Hansen was taking it easy on the Link because this wasn't what makes Hansen great by any stretch. Hansen in Puerto Rico should be a true horror of violence one would think at first. I guess judging by this and that ECW tag where Hansen showed up, that the brand of horrendous ass-kicking that Hansen could hand out only REALLY works in the truest, purest venues of the sweet science- where his lariat kicks the ass of all the barbed wire and chairshot in the immediate area.

Carlos Colon v. Hercules Ayala-Barbed Wire match:

This was a whole lot of macabre fun as these two are REALLY not afraid to go face and forehead first into the barbed-wire. Maybe the comparison of Colon to Onita would be the least far-fetched- their both charismatic faces who aren't afraid to revel in a big jug of blood and take a skin-shredding bump to get the to that next level of hardcoreness. Carlos takes the hardest walk when he fearlessly (or maybe stupidly) starts running the ropes despite the fact that they are wrapped in barbed-wire. Hercules Ayala isn't good at all, but he and Colon have a little chemistry that get these matches over to me in a Wahoo McDaniel vs Greg Valentine in the Noflok Scope in 1978 kind of way.

Kendo Nagasaki/Mr. Pogo v. Miguel Perez Jr./T.N.T.:

I was figuring that getting Mr Pogo in Puerto Rico would be a good glance into his persona that arose later- but, as with most things about PR, there is always baffling twist. In Puerto Rico, Mr Pogo wrestled a whole lot like his partner, Kendo Nagasaki- VERY 1970's style, very low-impact, pressure holds, more psychology- less movement. Not bad at all, but nothing like the blood-sucking freak he became in the nineties. TNT is, of course, Savio Vega, and he is really good on these tapes, carrying matches against about everyone he is in with and having the best match of any I saw against the Puerto Rican-stint Keiji Mutoh (shading out the Mutoh/Perez triumphant by a hair). Miguel Perez is very US old-style in PR on these tapes- as he is a really hairy Ricky Steamboat. Sorta. He is WADS better in Mexico and Japan.

Eddie Gilbert w/ Missy Hyatt v. Hurrican Castillo Jr.:

This wasn't what I expected. I was figuring on a Gilbert breakout in Puerto Rico to mirror the super-hardcore Gilbert that emerged in Tri-State against Cactus Jack, or maybe I was hoping for at least an inkling of that intense emergence to surface somewhere in this match, but it's basically a Mid-South style Heel/face old style cheap heat match. Eddie works and is good and

all, but I was hoping for something more psychotic from Hotstuff. Missy Hyatt gets the brunt of Hugo's commentary.

Ricky Morton/Robert Gibson v. Bobby Jagers/Dan Kroffat:

Rock and Roll match like you see every time, pretty much, except Dandy Dan Kroffat is doing a muscle gimmick and Hangman Bobby Jagger is ten years past his prime. Saving grace is the TRULY horrible RnR interviews, "I don't know KAY-rotty but I know KAY-2 by 4 and KAY-tire iron!"

T.N.T. v. Mr. Pogo:

This was good. TNT and Pogo build from a headlock to Pogo getting in his offense and topping off with a Cobra Clutch that TNT has to work out of, which sets up his transition to get TNT on offense after hitting the ropes which sets up his super kick. Bill Watts or Ole Anderson could have booked this match.

Invader #1 v. Manny Fernandez;

HEY NOW! Manny the Bull Fernandez was such a middle of the road performer that only REALLY shined when he and Wahoo were busting each other up and coating the ring in plasma. The only redeeming thing about this match is the toprope knee drop by Manny Fernandez which causes the true Bladejob From Hell- Invader I becomes all Gene Simmons-like and vomits a gallon blood all over the ring in one of the most repellent spectacles that you would HAVE to see to believe. Hangman Tim says its fake and that you can see him put the blood capsule in his mouth. I like to think that Invader I was really under pressure to perform every night and that his ulcer was diagnosed by Manny Fernandez's knee. Either way, it's pretty grisly, about as grotesque as you can imagine.

Abdullah the Butcher v. Dutch Mantel:

OH HOLY GOD! is there a lot of blood in this match. I mean MOUNTAINS of blood. I mean Wagner Power Sprayer out of the forehead blood. Blood! And it's Abdullah the Butcher vs Dutch Mantell so what did you expect?

Super Black Ninja v. Miguel Perez Jr.; Super Black Ninja v. Miguel Perez Jr.-Hair v. Hair; Super Black Ninja v. Miguel Perez Jr.:

These were really good as an embryonic Great Muta pretty much figures out his gimmick in these matches. The sudden movement, the cool stares, moonsaults, gymnastic spots, everything that got him over in the NWA in 89, was pretty much started in these matches. Whereas before, when he was tagging with Nagasaki and Pogo, he was the old-fashioned Japanese heel- the usual crap, everything short of throwing rice. In these matches he has actual deadly offense and it makes them better than the other matches on the tape- from a modern wrestling standpoint. Perez is up for the task as he sells the offense of Mutoh and also steps up his offense to transcend the US Pro-style that permeates all his other matches. A weird little footnote in the career of the inconsistent and irritatingly underachieving Keiji Mutoh.

Rocky Johnson v. Afa the Samoan:

Rocky Johnson was my favorite wrestler when I was eleven. This is him ten years later and he's kinda chubbed out, but I can still see why he was my fave- he was the wrestling version of Jim Kelly from Enter the Dragon. I never put the two together before. Afa sucks a whole bunch.

Afa the Samoan v. Carlos Colon:

This is the semi-finals to the truly pathetic Gillette Cup 88. Afa is the even more lethargic prototype for today's Meng as this match doesn't even hit a Memphis level of "Two Guys Hit Each Other A Lot" level of action. Kind of amazing in it's nothingness.

Invader I vs Ron Starr-Barbed Wire match:

This REALLY doesn't pretend to be anything but what it is- a smorgasborg of blood for all the vampire fans in the house at Roberto Clemente stadium. Not really a match but more of two guys raking the others forehead across the barbed-wire for twenty minutes. Invader I completes the joke by winning with a tricky roll-up.

T.N.T. v. Super Black Ninja:

This match is better than the Miguel Perez/Muta matches because TNT makes these super-heated and the psychology is deeper. It builds to the neat nearfall sequence in the process of building to the pinnacle of Mutoh attempting the moonsault and TNT escaping and getting the Caribbean title. Deeper and better wrestled than the Miguel Prez matches, TNT was the worker of the WWC at this point.

Mike Jackson v. Chicky Starr:

HOLY CRAP! It's Mike Jackson of Alabama and the unscrupulous Chicky Starr having a SCIENTIFIC WRESTLING match. In case there are those of you who don't remember scientific wrestling- it was American mat wrestling that Nelson Royal and Danny Hodge did when they wrestled guys who were also faces. It was really interesting and it was ALWAYS a time limit draw and everybody shakes hands at the end and the announcers talk about what a joy it was to watch and how it was what wrestling should be, meanwhile, you're hoping BlackJack Mulligan and Wahoo are gonna kick the shit out of each other pretty soon. Considering the giant heeldom Chicky was enjoying at this moment, it basically further freaks out the viewer when one realizes the Scientific-ness of the match. It basically means, in this match, that Chicky Starr has to work out of long-arm scissors for about five minutes and then they run the ropes until the drop toe hold and back to the pressure hold. Chicky uses his slight size advantage to finally overpower the diminutive Jackson, and Chicky wins Clean As A Sheet. What the fuck?

T.N.T. v. Buddy Landell:

A young Buddy Landell actually was a good approximation at times of his Nature Boy namesake as he and the best worker in WWC have a decent match. Buddy shows himself to be a good brawler as he and TNT get all Mid-South in their offense and get a little stiff. It works well as each gets their finisher- Landell's Figure Four, TNT's sleeper- and each escape after many heated moments. Good match with a crappy Mid-Atlantic Missed-Foot-In-The-Ropes screwjob.

Mr. Pogo v. Ricky Santana:

This is the beginning of the Mr Pogo we know and don't love. He basically gnaws Santana's forehead off and Santana blades like Santana is wont to do. Pogo eschews all wrestling hold and goes for his poor-man's Abdullah impersonation. Too short to be good. There is an ASS-LOAD of blood.

Rufus R. Jones v. Mr. Pogo:

JIMINY FUCKIN CHRISTMAS. Rufus R FreightTrain Jones was my favorite wrestler when I was EIGHT. In 1974. He was old back then. This match is from NINETEEN EIGHTY-EIGHT. Rufus was basically the Little Richard to Dusty Rhodes Pat Boone as Rhodes stole EVERYTHING from Rufus stylistically, but since Dusty was white and Rufus was black, Dusty got to run the NWA and WCW into the ground and eventually book himself to win a bunch of Bunkhouse Stampedes, while Rufus had to wrestle Mr Pogo in Puerto Rico to make the rent. This match is PRICELESS. A man who will sell out Kawasaki Stadium has to sell the goofiest comedy spots that the punchdrunk Rufus can come up with. Unbelievably weird. UNBELIEVABLY WEIRD.

Carlos Colon v. Ron Starr-Cage match:

This was the best Colon match on this tape and pretty much encompassed everything that was good on these tapes- great heat, solid psychology, barbaric gimmicks. A wrestling Match that is disguised as a brawl- the story is laid out and they hit their spots (as JDW would say about these kinda things:)). They bust each other open as they brawl around the cage, they work their way up the cage and drag each other back in while establishing their fearlessness by brawling while teetering at the top of the cage. They have a hot section where they beat the hell out of each to keep the other out of escape door. Star finally concedes that he can't beat Colon but totally sacrifices his body to keep Colon out of the door in the best part of the match. It pays off for him as Colon finally has to force both of himself and Star out the door at the same time after the total annihilation of Star's ribs won't budge Star out of the way. Colon refuses to acknowledge the referee after it is judged that Colon hit the ground first as he and Star continue to brawl all around Roberto Clemente stadium as the crowd goes wild. Star finally escapes to the dugout and this was the best Colon match on these babies. This really worked on a lot of levels and actually got your cynical, jaded reviewer into it much more than he he would admit.

Rufus R. Jones v. Detroit Demolition:

Possibly the worst match ever to be caught on tape. Detroit Demolition is a hideous Demotilion imitation- sorta like a fat guy dressed up as Axe for Halloween. His work is sub-Eudy if that's possible. Rufus R Jones is probably 62 years old in this match and he couldn't work back when he was just slightly past his prime back in 74 so you can imagine how this baby went. My wife, who is becoming quite the closet Benoit Mark despite herself, was actually in the room when I got to this one and she said, "God, Dean. These guys are horrible. This really sucks." She didn't understand . It was Rufus and a little boy in me freaked out and remembers him freightraining over Gene and Ole Andersen to save Tiger Conway Jr. or maybe Don Kernodle from the bastards from Minnesota who would break a youngster's arm every week. And I don't care if he sucked, he was my hero and I'll miss him.:)

-DEAN!

Puerto Rican TV October 1988-January 1989

Bobby Jagers/ Dandy Dan Kroffat AKA The Kansas Jayhawks v. Miguel Perez Jr. and Hurricane Castillo Jr. - Hair v. Hair:

Very Mid-South kind of match with tons of heat, bunches of near falls and not a whole lot of suplexes or highspots. Still really cool though, Kroffat handles most of the wrestling for the Jayhawks, hitting a hanging vertical suplex and a running powerslam. Jagers was RHODESian in both his Elbow-intensive wrestling and his kickass redneck interviews, DADDY! While Dandy Dan must be from Manitoba, Kansas. Miguel and Hurricane were Rock and Roll Expressesque-all house of fire offence and double dropkicks. Dandy Dan takes a back drop over the top rope and lands in the mud. He then attempts to monkey flip Hurricane who sits down getting the pin and causing the shaving of Kroffat and Jagers's hair (which was a real service to Danny as he was sporting the big time peroxide job, that just wouldn't have gone over in All Japan)

Jason The Terrible v. Invader 3:

Invader 3 is the face in this match, which is odd because you would think murdering Bruiser Brody would get him serious heel heat. Jason beats the piss out of him, but not nearly enough for me. Almost a squash, with Invader doing a big time White-Mask-Turning-Red blade job.

Jason The Terrible v. TNT series:

These guys wrestled twice on this tape, with both matches rocking. The matches had the basic super over face v. unstoppable monster heel storyline, kind of like Hogan v. Kimala if both guys were pretty good wrestlers instead of sinkholes of suck. TNT (aka my close personal friend Savio Vega) delivered a bunch of neat spinkicks and a killer superkick; while Jason went with the flying headbutts and slams and stuff. They trade highspots (real rare in PR) with Jason hitting the top rope to the floor headbutt, and TNT hitting a plancha. The first match ends with TNT getting fired up and mistakenly head butting Jason (he's got a hockey mask, thus the Jason name) and then falling prey to the flying headbutt. TNT then does a blade job that makes him look like he split his head open. Jason gets the win in the second match via some sort of Chicky Starr interference which I can't recall. Real good. TNT was super over and possibly the best local worker, and Jason was damn good for a big guy. Maybe the best pair of matches on these tapes.

Iron Shiek v. Carlos Colon:

This match was about 4 minutes long and Colon won with a roll-up but Sheik wasn't afraid to gouge his forehead so bad, he looked like he was in a car accident. AHHH SWEET PUERTO RICO HOME OF THE BLOOOD.

Ron Starr v. Chicky Starr

Not good, boys. When the Starr's hook it up the only losers are the fans. Neither guy bleeds enough. Chicky may be godlike but he can't wrestle or anything. The fans realizing how much this match stinks, start a big time Lucha riot with chair being tossed in the ring, fans running in

the ring when the wrestlers are outside, and sundry mayhem. The crowd fights had twice the psychology and workrate of the match in the ring. Both guys just kind of leave and not a moment too soon.

TNT v. Terry Funk

Terry Funk is in supreme goofball mode, climbing up scaffolding, falling down bleachers, hanging in between the ropes, not actually wrestling. TNT pretty much mailed it in too. Bloodless and not nearly as good as it should have been.

Hercules Ayala v. Carlos Colon

Once you have seen the W*ING Kanemura thing, a regular fire match just won't impress you. Really long and not enough wrestling or blood to get you through it. Hercules Ayala is even suckier than Hercules Hernandez, I don't mind Colon though if you look at the super over wrestlers of the 1980's. He was better than Baba, better than Hogan, better than Perro Aguayo, about as good as Inoki and Lawler and not as good as Flair. I got no problem with that.

Carlos Colon v. Ron Garvin

This match had all kinds of big match build up, with Garvin just coming off his ignoble NWA title run and Colon being a legend and all. The pomp and circumstance are longer than the match itself, as they do a lot of supremely mediocre mat wrestling, with Colon pulling off a neat rolling spinning toe hold, and Garvin delivering the idiotic Garvin Stomp (Ric Flair was so godlike that he made that shit seem semi-plausible). The end comes as Garvin fakes an injury and delivers the hands of stone punch to an unsuspecting Colon. He then goes off with the belt accompanied by the dastardly Chicky Starr, damn him and his evil sports club.

A Salute to the Fantastic Chicky Starr

Chicky Starr is the all-knowing force of evil in Puerto Rican wrestling, delivering all of his schemes and spreading his message of evil through an interview segment known as Chicky Starr's Sports Shop, the greatest bilingual interview segment in history. Watch enraptured as Chicky lounges in a bathrobe in the superSWANK opening montage as he asks Ron Starr the question we all wanted to know "Why did you betray me and my Sports club"- as he tells the Batten Twins "you talk too much why don't you shut up and let me translate for the people"- as he kibbitzes with the Kansas Jayhawks "let me tell you something DADDY!"- as he speaks for all of the wrestling public in telling the Youngbloods "Don't you think you ought to retire"- as he asks Dutch Mantel "Why did you betray me and my sports club" (Dutch Mantel does the worst face interview ever in this I'll use to be just lack you Chicky Staah, but now I rasil for the faans') Chicky Starr is a role model for us all.

-PHIL

NEXT WEEK: GAEA JUNIOR ALL-STARS! NEW JAPAN TOP O THE SUPER JUNIORS COMMERCIAL TAPE! (LOREFICE!) MICHINOKU PRO! ALL JAPAN WOMEN! (GLENN!) YOU NAME IT, CHEESE! plus Singles Going Steady and that infernal cutout bin. DIG IT, BABY!

HYPERVISUAL FIGHTING~!

Dean Rasmussen, Disciple of Jericho.